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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A DISCUSSION OF THE CHRISTIAN REACTION TO

WAR

EXAMINING THE THESIS THAT NEITHER PARTICIPATION
IN WAR, NOR WITHDRAWAL FROM IT, ARE COMPLETELY
SATISFACTORY CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVES, BUT THAT A
THIRD AND MORE ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE IS IMPERATIVE

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F .H. C.

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INTRODUCTION

It seems probable that once in the "dim dark days beyond recall", man lived in a blissful state in which he was quite oblivious to the shades of complexity in the problem of right and wrong, since it had not yet occurred to him to raise it. Then one unfortunate day, as Cro-Magnon slugged brother Cro-Magnon over the head with a substantial oaken bough, a faint suggestion began to creep into his thick dolichocephalic skull that perhaps this was not quite the sporting thing. There and then his conscience began an itching which defied him ever again to achieve the peaceful bliss of unconcern.

A more picturesque account of this is sometimes told, including the added details of a woman named Eve, and an apple. Essentially it is the same story. Man lived in a state of perfect happiness, until one dark day when he was induced to bit into a trick apple. Suddenly he found that he was pondering over the problems of good and evil. It ruined his blissful state, and thrust him from his Eden into a world of problems, weeds and work. God has done this ever since to anyone who has dared to become seriously concerned with right and wrong.

Some manage to crawl back into a little corner of Eden by turning all decisions over to a great diversity of official authority including Church, Government, Community, Parent, Friend, and so forth. This group follows along behind the bandwagon of Popular Opinion, carrying in front of them the slogan, "AFTER ALL IT'S NOT FOR ME TO DECIDE", and behind them the banner, "I ONLY DID WHAT I WAS TOLD". Christians are, however, forbidden to join these ranks,

for their commission to worship God with their minds, eliminates the possibility of permitting others to do their thinking for them.

Few areas of conduct, if any, have given the Christian more cause for heart searching than his destiny in regard to war. Two great Christian principles come into apparent conflict here. To promote justice, and especially justice for the weak, history would seem to testify that the sanctity of human life must on occasion be interrupted: that the steeds of violence must be given their heads until the authors of injustice have been restrained, and justice and mercy may together reign in peace.

Christian opinion divides here, between those who feel that justice is sufficiently important to justify whatever violent means are necessary to attain it, and those who are of the opinion that the Christian must seriously restrict the employment of violence regardless of the end in view.

It is the purpose of this work to discover a course of action for the Christian in regard to war, which will do violence neither to his integrity of thought, nor to his intimacy with God. It is my thesis that both participation in war, and withdrawal from it, if properly conceived and carried out, can be acceptable ways of proceeding in our present situation, but that neither one will be found completely satisfying to the Christian, since neither is a uniquely Christian method of procedure. There is need to go beyond either of these to find a course of action giving adequate expression to Christian belief in regard to war.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF WAR

THE NATURE OF WAR

REFUGEES

"Droop-necked and ashen-lipped, I see them pass
Where hamlets burn like brands and fields lie bare:
Women with babes, stumbling in sick despair,
And pit eyed men who grub for roots and grass.
Above in meteor streaks the planes harass;
Beyond, their comrades, slow and straggling, stare
From skull-marked faces; while like beasts, they share
Dark bundles, staggering under skies of brass.

These are the saddest casualties - these meek
Uncounted fugitives from the tanks and guns,
Uprooted like weeds, scattered like soot or foam.
O Spirit of Love, preserver of the weak,
Bend down and bless these hungering, weary ones
Who like new groping Ishmaels bleed and roam."

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

There is nothing very new to say about war that the centuries have not already told us. It is one area of human activity which reveals a change only in intensity, and that approximately in ratio to the increase in population of the world. It is sometimes argued that the destruction brought about by war has become more indiscriminate, and brings more

suffering to non-combatants than it used to, but I doubt that even our stone age cousin who hurled a rock into his enemy's campsite could tell with any degree of certainty whether he would take the hardiest warrior full in the face, or crush the skull of some child playing happily beside him. It is essentially the same picture that we see today as the bombardier presses a button and hopes for the best, except that today's stones bounce harder when they light. As Vannevar Bush says, "In spite of the bizarre claims of some over exuberant air-power enthusiasts the fact remains that if half the bombs launched at a target dropped within a thousand feet of it this was usually considered good performance from high altitude." * Admittedly, the civilian suffers a great deal in modern warfare, but then it never has had the effect of adding to his comfort. When the dramatist Euripides wrote the play, "The Women of Troy", taking for his theme the most glorious triumph of the armies of Greece, the Trojan War, but showing it, not in terms of the triumph of the victors, but in terms of the suffering of the vanquished, he left little doubt as to how well the civilian used to fare in days gone by.

A great cry has gone up too, to the effect that no civilized nation should use such a barbarous weapon as the atom bomb. Here again I am at a loss to see where this differs so greatly from previous weapons, except in the matter of degree. But even there it is not so far ahead of the more conventional methods of slaughter. "The fire raids on Japan were much more terrible, they reduced a far greater area of the frail Japanese cities to ashes, they caused

far greater casualties among civilians - panic, the crush of mobs, and horrible death;....." * As a matter of fact, it seems possible that by hastening the close of the war, the atom bomb may actually have saved lives. With the campaigns which were under way at the time, Bush says that we can't tell for certain how much the two bombs advanced the end of the war, but that it was, "Certainly enough to save more lives than they snuffed out, and more treasure than their use cost." **

The hope that civilized nations might be induced to stick to certain limiting rules of sportsmanship in regard to the whole game has pretty well faded now. The game has been found too deadly, and the cost of chivalry too high. Knudson's verdict seems accurate enough when he says, "Both penal law and war were condemned in the early church, but they could not be eliminated; and when this became clear, efforts were made in subsequent centuries to humanize and Christianize them as much as possible. War has resisted these efforts more effectually than the penal law, and today is the most serious moral problem confronting the church." ***

We have been accustomed to dividing wars into two main classifications: just and unjust, or more recently, defensive and aggressive. The "just" war (considered now by some to be a contradiction in terms) is one fought at the command of proper authority, for an adequate motive, a worthy end, and under certain limiting rules. At varying times in history the just war has been employed to enrich

*Ibid p.91.

**Ibid p.92.

***Knudson A. C. - The Principles of Christian Ethics p.223

the conquering army through ransom, booty, and slave; to punish peoples who have behaved unjustly; to gain control of territory which could then be developed more efficiently, or even to protect interests already established for that end; to bring the blessing of civilization to backward peoples; and finally, to defend the nation against attack. World opinion has increasingly frowned on the first four uses listed, in that to varying degrees they are aggressive wars doing violence to the right of a nation or a people to maintain its existence inviolate. "Much play is made with the idea of a 'just war'. But every competent student knows, little as one would think it from the pronouncements of archbishops, that a 'just' war did not originally mean a 'righteous' war, but only a 'regular' war sanctioned by the ruler, as opposed to private feuds or brigandage. In the original sense of the phrase Mussolini's Abyssinian adventure was most certainly a 'just war' ." *

The aggressive war today receives, on the other hand, almost universal condemnation, since it indicates the fact that the nation conducting it did of its own free choice set in motion the whole ugly business, and must therefore bear the responsibility for the total atrocity. World opinion was largely expressed by Mr. Justice Birkett (England) in a passage which he contributed to the Nuremberg Trials, and which reads as follows: "The charges in the indictment that the defendants planned and waged aggressive wars are charges of the utmost gravity. War is essentially an evil thing. Its consequences are not confined to belligerent states alone, but affect

*G. C. H. MACGREGOR - The Christian Pacifist and the New Testament
p. 17.

the whole world. To initiate a war of aggression therefore, is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." Witness to the acceptance of this opinion is seen in the active propaganda barrage which accompanies modern conflicts, designed to prove to the world in general, and to your own nation in particular, that the other fellow started it.

The defensive war sounds on the surface as though it were made of nobler stuff, and consisted simply in warding off the attacks of the aggressor. Modern conditions of warfare will however, permit no such simple definition. Air power and modern strategy have combined to broaden the point of contact between opposing forces so that it can no longer be called a battle "line", but is more apt to include the major part of each nation. The best method of defense has become that of punishing the enemy to the extent that he cannot effectively attack you, and this includes the destruction of industry, property, and morale, often far behind the main area of conflict. The "defensive" war therefore, contains within its definition almost every possibility of horror that the aggressive war has. Nor has it been found to be beyond the ingenuity of would-be aggressors to attack a neighboring state with the noble intent only of "defending" nationals who happen to live within the neighbor's border. It is doubtful then that one can assume too much of beauty or nobility for even the defensive war in its actuality.

Whether we call it just, or unjust; aggressive or defensive,

the true picture of war will be seen in what it accomplishes. Any halo of chivalry that the two recent world conflicts may have left still in place over war was blown completely off at Hiroshima. The atom bomb is refreshingly honest in what it has to say about war, and speaks with a vividness seldom achieved. At Hamburg 40,000 human beings were wiped out in two successive nights of attack, but that had taken hundreds of planes and thousands of bombs, and over a comparatively large area of time. One awful night in Tokyo 100,000 people burned to death in a fire raid, but we've all had some experience with fire and you can sometimes outrun it. Dresden was pretty sobering, when according to the President of the International Red Cross one quarter of a million lives were snuffed out in one night. But even this lacked the vividness of the atom bomb which in an instant - with one terrible sentence - wrote out the lives of 86% of the doctors in a city; 72% of the nurses and hospital workers; and destroyed a faithful center of Christianity. True, the total could not compete with Dresden, nor even Tokyo, since a mere 80,000 perished. But it was the clarity with which the bomb spoke. One moment the 80,000 were there - men, women, and children at various stages of work, play, and rest - some sitting quietly, some running, some talking, some laboring intently; all hopelessly imprisoned by time and space as the bomb slid silently down through the skies: then in a flash - vanished! "It was as if they had never been, save perhaps for a strange shadow impressed upon a rock or wall which they had protected from the blast." * There is a frankness and honesty about

the A-bomb that cannot be found in the more plodding types of destruction.

When we have totaled the physical destruction of war we have still only a fractional picture of its accomplishments. It is estimated that in the first half of the twentieth century war accounted for something in the neighborhood of fifty million lives, or in other words an average of 1,000,000 each year, which is a considerable toll to exact. But this gives only a faint suggestion of the total horror. To be included are the pictures of incredibly torn, misshapen, empty bodies that linger on more dead than alive; the dull, hopeless ache of widowed, orphaned hearts; the hollow lifeless eyes of those who neither hope nor care; the frightened, bewildered children violently shaken from arms that cradled and are now still; the mortal scar on earth and heaven that generations will not remove; all these and more are the immediate result of war, seen against the enshrouding background of hunger and hate.

It is not surprising therefore, to find a cross section of humanity from the pacifist to the career soldier speaking in condemnation of war as such. "I am sick and tired of war" , declared General William T. Sherman. "It is only those who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded, who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell." * Says General H.H. Arnold, "One nation cannot defeat another today. That concept died with Hiroshima. War is like fire: you prevent a fire, or you can try to put it out, but you can't 'win' a fire because fire is destruction." **

*Wilson - The Christian and peace.

p.22.

**Ibid p.22.

An international viewpoint is expressed in the charter of the United Nations, which declares that, "We the people of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind!.....(and are determined)....." to live together in peace with one another as good neighbors." *

To sum up, The American Friends Service Committee analyses the world attitude in this way: "Regardless of the extent to which war in the past may have been looked upon as an adventure or as a normal instrument of national policy, there can be little doubt that such attitudes today are obsolete. The widespread desire for peace among the great masses of the people all over the world seems to us clear beyond all question." **

The modern revulsion from war is due not only to its record in causing suffering and death, but also to its failure to achieve valuable positive results. " The First World War was fought to make the world safe for democracy, and democracy is less safe than at the beginning of the conflict. The Second World War was fought to make the world free from Fascism and Dictatorships. It did neither. Fascism in one form or another still flourishes; more dictatorships are more firmly in the saddle than when Hitler marched on Poland; more people are under iron heels. Wars which we have lived through and which were to bring peace have bred fears, increased hatreds and intensified race and national prejudices. It may be that wars have achieved some good. Whether what they have achieved could have been won in another way is a matter of speculation..." ***

*Ibid p.23

** American Friends Service Committee - The United States and the Soviet Union. p. 1.
Wilson - opp. cit. p. 22.

Doctor Albert Einstein gives striking utterance to a sobering thought about war's future effect when he states that "The war after next will be fought with clubs." A cartoon appearing recently in some of our newspapers depicts a devastated waterfront scene with an unkempt human being in loincloth peering from behind a twisted girder. The shield gripped in his left arm is a battered car door; the club in his right an automobile steering column, the horn wire dangling inanely from the end.

It is true that today war has no close rival as a cause of misery and waste. It has tremendous capacity for destruction, and very little possibility of anything constructive. But to these facts the uneasy possibility has now been added that it can eventually get out of hand and set civilized life as we know it back thousands of years. Perhaps the most pressing problem facing the human race today is that of finding a way to extricate itself from the chain of circumstances that twice in this century has locked together the greater part of the world in mortal conflict.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR

"To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. "

Our Christian ancestors preceded friend Hamlet by several centuries in pondering over this problem, but the first several generations of them, being perversely human individuals, failed to prepare for us any clearly defined and uniformly expressed attitude toward war. In fact the average man in the street among them seems to have been blissfully unaware that he ought to have had one, even for himself. In all fairness we shouldn't be too hard on them though, because the matter had apparently not as yet come to a head: Christianity had not on the one hand realized the full implications of the faith she was proclaiming, and on the other hand the potentialities of war had hardly begun to be brought out. Accordingly we must bear with them in their youth and innocence.

Several factors helped to obscure the question and to delay it from becoming a vital issue. One of the more important was the fact that the soldier was also the Emperor's policeman. Bloody combat was not his sole, nor necessarily his chief duty. As a result the Christian could conceivably be both opposed to war and in favor of the military profession at the same time.

Then too, the question rarely became a personal one for the early Christian. This was partly because a good percentage of

them were, as slaves, members of the Jewish race, and members of the gentler sex, exempt from military service; and also because the Emperor in actual practice rarely used his authority to levy conscripts, since the number of volunteers for military service was normally sufficient to meet his needs. Accordingly, Kenneth Scott Latourette in his "History of the Expansion of Christianity", maintains that the ethical problem involved in military service did not become an issue for at least the first three centuries, as far as the majority of Christians were concerned. *

Having now reduced the problem to insignificance we shall proceed to rummage around in it and see what of any value is left. If the question of war didn't concern the majority of Christians in the first three centuries, there was still a minority that did get stirred up about it, and when we remember that the thinkers in any generation are likely to be in the minority, we may well have the important group after all. Once again, however, we must pause and proceed cautiously, because much that we take to be an objection to war may well be an objection rather, to some other aspect of the military profession. For example, when C.J. Cadoux gives accounts of several Christians being martyred for their refusal to act as soldiers, ** it is difficult to determine whether their main objection was to actual warfare or to the pagan worship that went on in connection with military service. Similarly when Harnack in his "Militia Christi" lists the things connected with service in the

*Vol. I p. 268.

**Cadoux - The Early Christian Attitude to War.

Roman army which would offend the Christian conscience he mentions not only the shedding of blood on the battlefield, but the use of torture in law courts, the passing of death sentences by officers and the executing of them by common soldiers, the unconditional military oath, the all pervading worship of the Emperor, the sacrifice in which all were expected in some way to take part, and the average behavior of soldiers in peace time. *

Limiting ourselves then, to the objection to war itself, we find the early Christian conscience repelled on four general bases. First and most obvious was the violence and bloodshed, so foreign to the whole weight and temper of their Master's teaching. Second to this was the fact that he had committed them to a positive offensive of peace by instructing them to return love for hate; good for evil; to serve men rather than to enslave them; to dignify human life, not destroy it; and to apply a rule of gold, rather than a sword of baser origin. The third place at which the Christian conscience was afflicted by war was in the belief that it was the place of God and not man, to judge and if necessary condemn and meet out vengeance, and the fourth was in her revulsion from unqualified submission to any authority which might interfere with the Christian's primary allegiance, which was to God.

Now when you come right down to it, we have among our unco-operative minority, some rather impressive names. W. P. Patterson

*p. 46f.

writing in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, says that among those who with varying degrees of emphasis stated that war was, "an organized iniquity with which the church and the followers of Christ could have nothing to do", were Justyn Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Cyprian, and Lactantius. * One could quote at length from their writings, but a few samples will serve our purpose here. For example, Tertullian argues that when Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Jesus "cursed the works of the sword for ever after." ** Origen speaks depreciatingly of the military profession as one prized by ignorant and blind seekers after wealth and glory. *** Cyprian declaims about the wars "scattered everywhere with the bloody horror of the camps", saying that, "homicide is a crime when individuals commit it, (but) it is a virtue when carried on publicly." **** Lactantius refers to the prevalence of wars as one of the great blots on the history of the morals of humanity, saying that, "it is always wrong to kill a man whom God has wished to be a sacrosanct creature." ***** Even the non-Christian, Celsus gives us evidence of a rather strong Christian objection, since he complains that if all men did as the Christians the Emperor would be left defenseless. ***** Harnack sums the matter up by saying that, "Christians were charged with a disinclination to serve in

*Volume 12. p. 678.

**De Patientia - Patrologia Latina - ed. J. P. Migne Volume 3 Col.1. p. 1254. (: itaque et gladii opera maledixit in posterum).

***Gregory Thaumaturgus' Panegyric on Origen, 241 A.D. VI. 76f.

****Cyprian's Ad Donatum 247 A.D. 6. 10f.

*****Lactantius' Divine Institutes VI. xviii. 10-13.

*****Origen Against Celsus VIII 68, 73.

the army and the charge was undoubtedly well founded." *

Finally, the Christian objection to war is registered in some of the earlier canons of the churches. One widely copied group were the Canons of Hippolytus, a learned Roman Christian who became interested in ecclesiastical regulations and produced a church order early in the third century, which was copied at least by some of the Eastern churches. ** The originals we haven't, but indications are that on the matter of membership, "a soldier or magistrate who wielded the power of the sword could not be admitted by baptism to membership in the Christian church unless he had first resigned his military or quasi-military calling; that if a catechumen or a baptized Christian became a soldier he must give it up or else suffer exclusion from the church, and that similarly a mere desire on his part to become a soldier, showing as it was thought a contempt for God, must be relinquished on pain of rejection or excommunication. *** Similarly, we read in the Canons of the Church of Alexandria that soldiers are not to be received indiscriminately, and that a Christian may not become a soldier unless by order. ****

Granted then that several outstanding Christians of the time were objecting strenuously to war, we have now to account for the fact that as time went by, their fellow Christians began to appear in the army in increasing numbers, and apparently with very little criticism from civilian congregations. This does not of

*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries
- A.Harnack E.T. from Third German ed. 1906. ii. 57. n. 1.

**Cadoux - opp. cit. pp 119-128.

***Ibid p. 126.

****The Anti-Nicene Fathers Volume V. p.257.

course prove that the church had no misgivings nor uneasiness in connection with military service, but at any rate she didn't feel strongly enough about it to openly challenge the practice to any degree.

It may be worth noting to begin with that whereas many outstanding Christians complained violently against warfare and all it involved, and a considerable, if not so unanimous objection was made to the Christian's being in the army at all, no Christian of any note came out in defence of warfare, and those who attempted to justify the presence of Christians in the army seem to have been doing so in the heat of argument rather than because they advocated it themselves. For example, Tertullian boasts to the pagans of the large number of Christians in the army, but argues with his fellow Christians that there ought not to be any there at all. *

The fact that the number who were there was growing may partly be accounted for by the "moral lag" of the majority behind the thinking minority, as Old Testament Israel lagged behind her prophets, but however we account for it, a major factor seems to have been in the apparent inability of Christians who deplored warfare, to make a complete and unqualified rejection of it. In order to understand their hesitation it is necessary to probe a little deeper into the working of their minds.

When we do look further beneath the surface, the first important influence that we discover is an extensive collection

of Apocalyptic, Eschatological warfare, to which they are to be at the very least, enthusiastic spectators. Not only is this divinely sanctioned, but their eternal future depends on its successful outcome. It was hard for them to reject all warfare in the face of this spectacular series of events by which time and world affairs were to be brought to their momentous conclusion.

A little deeper, but related to this, is the idea that God often used war as a method of divine punishment, to chastise a rebellious nation. This did not necessarily justify the acts of the army performing the chastisement, but we must admit that it does lend a much better color to the picture if we can convince ourselves that the opposing forces are a thoroughly contemptible lot in revolt against God. The soldier then acquires a bit of a halo, as God's divine instrument of justice. By the time we throw in the idea that government itself enjoys its authority only as God ordains and permits, we are not far from the point where war is almost holy, and one would be failing God if he did not do his part in it.

This is not as ridiculous as it may seem. As early as the fourth century, Constantine had made the cross into an imperial military emblem bringing good fortune and victory, and had made the supposed nails of the cross which his mother had sent to him, into bridle bits and a helmet for use in his military expeditions. About this time too, the Synod of Arles was enacting a canon (3) which, depending on interpretation, at least left

military service perfectly free and open to the Christian, and may have threatened with excommunication any Christian soldiers who insisted on leaving the army: "De his qui arma projiciunt in pace, placuit abstineri eos a communione. " The extent to which decisions of this synod were generally binding is uncertain, but it does reveal a tendency in official thought. In 416 A. D. non-Christians were forbidden to serve in the army! * If further evidence of the growing tendency is necessary, we need only observe the Crusades that appeared a few centuries later.

Probing still deeper into our hesitating friend's mind we come across the final major influence holding back his decision to reject war. It turns out to be the halo that the Old Testament has placed over war, especially as depicted in great leaders such as Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and David, and glowingly brought on into the New Testament by the writer of Hebrews. Mind you, our friend had no more idea of copying the Old Testament literally than we have of copying the New, but the influence undeniably was there, helping to hold back his decision.

This reserve of judgement and lingering hesitancy of condemnation in the early Christian provided an excellent haven in which rationalization could nurture and protect her old tooth and claw inclinations well hidden from the new law of all pervading love. It needed only the coming of a strong leader who could astound the world with his tremendous military victories in the name

*Codex Theodosianus XVI, x, 21.

of the cross to emancipate for centuries these tendencies spared and sheltered by hesitant indecision.

To sum up we might say that the early Christians rejected war in theory, but reserved a corner for it in practice; were repelled by the actuality, but drawn by a rosy dream of what it might sometimes be. There is evidence that the first Christians took Jesus at His word and decided that "Christian soldier" was a contradiction in terms. Cadoux says that, "with one or two possible exceptions no soldier joined the church and remained a soldier until the time of Marcus Aurelius (161 - 180 A.D.)," and that the writings of Tertullian about 200 - 210 A.D., "are the earliest record we possess of any Christian joining the army when already converted." * The overwhelming shift of opinion apparently came a century later when Constantine stuck a sword in the cross, and conquered in that sign.

It would seem that only time can serve to show what remarkable creatures we human beings are. While the church was weak, persecuted and struggling, it was as much as your life was worth to confess the faith of the church: when it became a strong, secure, triumphant church, it worth your life to question it. I still smile at the not so gentle irony employed by Doctor Willard Brewing in his address to the General Council of the United Church of Canada in Toronto in October of 1950. " The World Council of Churches has done a finer but yet amazing thing. It has 'recognized as a

*C. J. Cadoux - opp. cit. p. 245.

living part of the Christian fellowship those Christians that refuse military service of all kinds and are convinced that an unqualified witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God.' For the first three centuries of Christianity the question was whether those who took up arms should remain within the Christian Church. It seems the church has moved backward."

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT TODAY

THE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT TODAY

"Embattled strife might cease,
And war clouds turn out sunny,
If all men worked for peace,
The way they work for money."

- Martha Banning Thomas.

Modern Christians are unanimous in at least one opinion in regard to war, namely that it presents them with one of their most difficult and complex problems. They are agreed further that war is not and never can be a uniquely Christian pastime, since it conflicts so violently with the main emphasis of Christian teaching. The conflict is not primarily at the destruction of human life, since all men have a habit of dying sooner or later anyway; but the violence done to human personality when men are encouraged to consider their brothers as merely experimental targets strikes many as a sacrilege before a creating God!

Just on the point of refusing to have any part of war, however, a majority of Christians today pause again, and wonder if even more violence is not done to human personality if they fail to take an unwavering stand in matters of justice and fair play. The matter is one for theological debating societies only so long as nations are at peace: when war grips the major part of the world the question is no longer theoretical, but instead very real, practical and urgent. At that point it is futile nonsense to go on explaining how Christians should avoid war, since it is in their laps, and whether or not they like it in no way alters the immanent necessity of doing something about it. The Christian

may well regard war as a stop-gap, and as both a sign and admission of failure to measure up to standards reasonably expected from mankind, but at the same time, when it is the policy of the nation he has obligated himself to by accepting the privileges of citizenship he cannot easily shrug the matter off. Somewhere in between the course he would ideally choose by himself, and the actual course to which his nation has committed him, is the path that the Christian must temporarily walk.

An increasing number of Christians in recent years have come to feel that in the best interests of their nation, God's will, and their own spiritual health, they must follow a course which concedes far more to the Christian ideal than to national policy. The belief that international disputes could and should be settled by peaceful means has been a tradition kept alive for centuries by the monastic orders, and by such groups as the Waldenses in the Middle Ages and the Quakers in modern times. About 1905 the term "Christian Pacifism" began to be associated with this belief, and with the impetus of two world conflicts the term has become firmly established in our vocabulary. Usually it denotes the position or belief that a Christian can under no circumstances use armed force for the settling of international disputes. *

The voice of Christian pacifism is relatively strong today and well worth our notice. It is based on the belief that the cross of Jesus Christ was intended not merely as an object of faith, but of imitation as well: that on the cross Jesus placed

His seal on a method of meeting and overcoming evil that is to be employed by His followers for all time. This way of the cross is to overcome error, not with violence but with truth; to overcome hatred with love, and evil with good; all in the light of the fact that Jesus bestowed upon peacemakers the title, "children of God". It is in line with Paul's commission to, "render unto no man evil for evil.....if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink. The Pacifist believes that war violates the intended unity of the human family, and denies the infinite value that Jesus placed upon each individual within it; in short that it is so utterly contradictory to the principles taught by Jesus that a Christian must of necessity abandon the one or the other.

The modern emphasis in Christian pacifism is away from the idea of "conscientious objector" and toward "peacemaker". There is, moreover, a gratifying sense of realism in the more thoughtful type of "peacemaker", in that he is not oblivious to the part played by violent coercion in the ordering of our present society. For example, G.C.H. MacGregor says that the Christian pacifist ought not, "to try to prove that the New Testament forbids all use of force in the dealing of man with man, either as individuals or as units in a community. Tolstoyan pacifism seems to be a much too easy simplification of the issue. Certainly everything goes to suggest that Jesus had a profound mistrust of forcible methods of righting wrong and that he consistently urged upon his followers a new and better way. But it is this new way that the New Testament

emphasises, and not the mere repudiation of force." *

It is also reassuring to find the admission that pacifism is neither the only course open to the sincere Christian, nor is it necessarily the most obvious. "The state still retains its function of securing the good life for its subjects, by what we call comprehensively the 'social services', and therein serves the will of God; and these services cannot be sharply divided from its military activities. Even in making war it is striving for justice, in its blundering way, possibly in the only way open to it after all that has gone before. Nor can any of us dissociate ourselves from responsibility for the sinful situation in which war occurs, so intimately is the whole structure of society knit up with those things that lead to war as a last resort. The Christian who refuses military service is therefore not doing the ideally right thing. He is denying to his community the support to which it is in justice entitled from all who have shared in its benefits. He is denying to his neighbors the particular service they ask of him, whatever other service he may render. When once war has broken out, there is no way, for the time being, of reconciling the claim of God upon us through the social order with his claim upon us through the Christian order. Both claims we cannot satisfy. Either way we must act with a bad conscience." ** In the same work, C. H. Dodd goes on to explain the pacifist's position in drawing the line before participation in war by saying, "We therefore judge deliber-

*opp. cit. pp. 18-19.

**C.H. Dodd - The Theology of Christian Pacifism. p. 14.

ately that while we may hope to Christianise industry, commerce, government, the criminal system and other activities of the social order, by taking part in them, in spite of their un-Christian elements, we cannot Christianise war by taking part in it. For this judgement we must take personal responsibility; by it the reasoned justification of our action stands or falls. Our judgement may be mistaken, our action wrong: God alone knows." *

The Christian pacifist then is humbly initiating a peace offensive aimed at removing the causes of war. He feels that his personal repudiation of it is at once a first step at eradication; a clear witness of his conviction and intention; and a necessary step if his action is to remain consistent with the basic tenets of the Christian faith. He seems to be doing this with his eyes open, and not unaware of the implications of his action. Says John Ferguson, "The pacifist's refusal to fight may bring war nearer. A partially pacifist nation may be a sore temptation for the aggressively minded. An example of this occurred in 1938. At that time through the League of Nations Union there was organized a considerable campaign to replace the policy of armed isolation to one of collective security. What the effect of its success would have been is difficult to estimate. Certainly the disunity of the other nations was an added motive impelling Germany to war; equally certain a strong lead from this country (Britain) would have carried no little weight in other parts of Europe. But the campaign

*Ibid p. 15.

was defeated by a combination of uneasy bedfellows, the Rightwing isolationists and the pacifists. It is at this point, when our stand for the right as we see it seems to make things worse, that our faith is most urgently needed." *

The Christian pacifist then, in rejecting war, is following a course which he believes honesty compels when the New Testament teachings are laid out plainly before the unintimidated Christian conscience. The charges of cowardice or escapism sometimes flung his way seem grossly to misrepresent the motive of the sincere and active peacemaker who chooses this course. Pursued doggedly, it will extract from him who chooses it, all the courage, tenacity and endurance he can muster.

We have yet to consider the other main area of contemporary Christian thought regarding this matter, namely that which, bearing in mind the ugly reality of war, still has not entirely rejected participation in it. It is somewhat the situation which arises when the parent who believes firmly in the general principle that it is wrong to cause children pain, suspends the principle momentarily if his own youngster insists on making sorties into the livingroom rug with the scissors. The same principle is evident in the action of a judge who sends a parent to prison for having kept a child confined in a locked room for several years. One moment he is saying that it is contemptible to so confine a human being, and the next he passes a sentence that effects that very

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condition on the parent.

Actually it is an attempt to be in harmony with, and to make evident to all mankind, a fact that has been noted in the very nature of human existence, namely that the person who does wrong normally suffers for it. The prodigal son generally comes in for his share of grief and misery sooner or later. The wayward daughter most often suffers acutely in the shame brought upon herself and those she loves. The selfish man suffers in the doors closed to him, and so on.

Humanity has judged this to be fair enough, and a strong principle on which to base our living together. We have called it "justice", and set ourselves to helping the universe out with the details of application, to the end that this principle may be as "universal", obvious, impartial and immediate as possible. Thus when a child does wrong and natural calamity doesn't overtake him at once, the average parent provides some sort of artificial discomfort by way of introduction to this universal fact. Human society has provided its police forces to effect the application of the same fact to such of its members as are deserving, with as much certainty and dispatch as can be provided. Many Christians feel that on an international scale we can do no less, and that we betray friend and foe alike if we fail to challenge international crimes, and punish them with whatever means are available. It is one thing to insist broadly that we ought to exercise a love for all mankind even akin to God's love, but it is quite another to

forget what the love of God is like. To remove the sternness from it is to turn it into a weak, meaningless, nauseating thing.

Sydney Cave warns us against this when he says, " (Jesus) spoke to Jews, and the Jews had learnt that there was but one God, the God who was both just and holy. It was this just and holy God whom he worshipped and proclaimed. He, too, held God in awe, and when He spoke of this just and holy God as a God of love, He did so not as one who is repeating a truism, but as one who reports a strange and amazing discovery. We miss the import of His words if we forget that the Father, whose love He bade men trust, was the God who at all costs was to be obeyed, and whom His hearers had already learnt to fear. We may learn not only from His speech but from His silences - from what He did not need to say because His hearers had already gained from the Old Testament the realization of God's holiness and power." *, and again, "Our Lord spoke less of the love of God than much popular preaching would suggest, and nowhere does He speak of that love as if it were self-evident. That the holy God loves men, was not for Him a truism but a paradox. What we call forgiveness is often the expression not of love but of lovelessness. We condone an offence because we care too little about the offender to be indignant at the wrong that he has done." ** Here, then, from the gospel of Matthew, is a sampling of this same love of God which we are urged to imitate, as it expresses itself to wrongdoers: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which

*Sydney Cave - The Christian Way p. 25.

**Ibid pp. 48,49.

believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea ...
....Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.....He will miserably destroy those wicked men.....cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.....and these shall go away into everlasting punishment.....whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." * In searching out a God of love, we have found a God of justice. The first principle is weak and useless - meaningless without the second. We could not worship such a God!

It seems too, that a certain stern rigidity of law is necessary to bring human beings to a way of thinking that can appreciate yet higher values, just as Paul found that the Old Testament law had served as a schoolmaster to prepare his generation for an appreciation of Christ. We do ourselves no service, nor do we further the cause of Christ, if we turn the stern, disciplining love of God into a soft, sweet, jelly-like substance that appeals to no one. It is the firmness of the "Rock of Ages" that attracts and inspires confidence. You can depend on love that cannot be tricked, bribed, intimidated, nor coaxed from the strict line of justice it will follow. It is easy to overemphasize the mercy with which it is tempered.

*Matthew 18:6, 22:13, 21:41, 25:30, 25:46, 21:44.

One other factor bears upon Christian participation in war. In "total war", as today's conflict usually turns out to be, every living person in the nation is involved whether he wishes it or not. Total war depends for its effort not only on the men in the battle line, but upon a great many other factors such as the efficiency of war plants, medical care, food production, housing for labor, and maintenance of morale, which involves everyone resident in the country. The man who objects to the whole business and will do nothing to help his own nation is effectively assisting the opposing forces, both materially and in the important matter of morale. It is this sort of predicament that often persuades the Christian to choose the side least in error and support it fully, even to participation in actual combat.

The Christian today, then, is a person who has before him a great ideal. Christ has told him that the two greatest things he can do are first, to love God completely, which love will express itself in obedience; and to love mankind completely, which love in turn will express itself in seeking out the highest good of his fellow men. The pacifist seems to have taken the first of these and said that love of God and the obedience implied necessitates his refusal to have any part of the slaughter of his fellows entailed in war. The Christian who feels the necessity of assisting justice even when it involves resisting to the death those who would do wrong, has drawn his emphasis from the second of these commandments, and he will make the road from Jerusalem to Jericho safe for travellers

even if he has to chop the heads off some of the robbers who are beating, robbing, and killing them. * Either way, the person who chooses one of these paths has the satisfaction of knowing that, "there is none other commandment greater than these." **

*See Luke 10:25-37.

**Ibid 12:31b.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT OF THE FUTURE ?

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The future course for the Christian must of necessity be that which his communion with God impresses upon him as the way he should proceed. To suggest that this will be one set and uniform path is to deny that there is any diversity in human personality, talent, and ability; and to deny any resourcefulness or imagination to God. This chapter will not, therefore, attempt to limit the Christian in his great adventure with God, but will simply try to indicate some of the values the Christian will need to keep in mind while searching out his path.

First, it is well to face up to the fact that the world in which we live, though permeated to a large extent with Christian standards of ethics and morality, is not a Christian world. The Christian therefore, has citizenship in two conflicting areas of responsibility. This is clearly emphasized by G.B. Caird as he writes, "The Bible, then, recognizes two standards of behavior. There is the standard of law, which can reasonably be demanded of all human beings in virtue of their humanity. And there is the standard of grace, to which nobody can hope to attain unless he has entered the kingdom of God by the narrow door of repentance, and lives his life by the power of the Spirit of God.

.... In the past the church has so far misunderstood the teaching of her master as to try and enforce the Christian standard by law on a whole nation, Christians and non-Christians alike. It is a

political error of the first magnitude to demand by law, conduct which is possible only under grace. The existence of this double standard sometimes leads to differences of opinion among Christians, as, for example, in time of war. At the level of law it is right that an aggressor should be restrained, and that international justice should be maintained by force of arms. At the level of grace the Christian is bidden not to resist him that is evil. As a citizen of the nation the Christian comes under law, as a member of the church he comes under grace. Some Christians are pacifists because they believe that the standards of grace apply to all their activities. Others believe that the standards of grace apply to their personal life, but cannot be extended to cover the communal life of the nation. One point, however, is sufficiently clear, that the Christian cannot impose his Christian standards on those who do not share his Christian convictions." *

If, therefore, this world were made up of sincere, ardent Christians, war would be unthinkable. But the reality which faces us is that our predominantly paganistic world will in all probability get itself and us involved in further wars. Many of our Christian brethren in the future will continue to resolve the predicament by refusing to take part in the slaughter that war has increasingly become. The pacifist should consider his motive carefully. If he abstains from war simply to make sure that his record with God is clear, it is not too high a motive. If he holds back in order to convince his enemies of his good will toward them, the possibility of success is there, but is not great. If he hopes to convince his friends of the rightness of his course, he need

expect but little progress. If on the other hand his desire is simply to be of service to God, the chances of success are unlimited. The sincere pacifist witness can be of untold value. It is a bold assertion of the rights of the individual conscience, and at the same time a warning against the moral peril in the increasing authority of the state. An example of this was the recent stand of 18 year old Robert Michener, Quaker, who received a six year sentence as a result of his refusal to co-operate with the United States draft laws. Shortly after the young Quaker's sentence was passed, the following poetic comment on the power of state over individual conscience appeared in a United States weekly magazine.

I

He didn't lie
He didn't sreal
He didn't fight
He was eighteen

He wouldn't go to war
He wouldn't run away
He wouldn't change his faith
He wouldn't even register

Our people are frightened
Our country wants killers
To bolster its weakness
We sent him to prison

Six years in a prison
Six years for a conscience
That didn't suit his judges
Is this our free America ?

II

He is still too young
To make a contract
Or cast a ballot
Or hold an office

He wasn't tried
By a jury
Of his youthful peers
They're too young for that

Government
And economics
And politics
Are not for youth

Must children bomb
And burn and shoot
Or live in jail
In America ?

III

Youth's jailers
Are parents
Of soldiers
Armed killers

Loving God
Of Jesus
Forgive us
Our blindness

With chaplains
And crosses
And Bibles
And Napalm

You made us
For lighting
Not cursing
The darkness.

- Charles Mackintosh.

There is need for constantly reminding ourselves that the nation does not have a separate existence apart from the millions of individual citizens, each of whom has a sovereign right, and duty under God to order his own life as he believes best. Admittedly, in order to live in society and enjoy the benefits of government, each citizen must forego some of his freedom and some of his rights, but the witness of Christian pacifism is a very real reminder of the ever present danger of permitting the state to assume control of too large an area of the individual's life.

A witness such as that of Michener also serves to prod a drowsy national conscience. It serves to quicken the national awareness of the whole problem, and in this way the pacifist witness can always be a factor bolstering high ethical morality. It will continue to be for some time, an effective area in which to serve God, and many thousands of volunteers will be needed there.

If there is a danger in pacifism, it seems to me that it

will lie in the temptation to assume that it is the will of God that all men be pacifists, and to expend all energies in the effort to coerce them into adopting this viewpoint. Any time the Christian takes his eyes from the will of God and begins to ride his own hobby horse, which may or may not be the will of God in that situation, he is in sad error.

"I looked at Christ,
And the dove of peace
Flew into my heart.
I looked at the dove,
And it flew away."

It is never very becoming to the Christian to spend his time and energy complaining that an unsympathetic majority doesn't think the way he does. Christianity is not, nor ever has been a blueprint for group activity. It is, and always has been a manner of living for individuals; their relationship to God and man being on a personal and individual basis. Their task cannot be done by pressure groups nor legislation. Doctor Pidgeon underlines Christian method when he says, "It is only solidarity with men that opens the way to the highest ministry. What men need is not to have great things done for them; it is to be enabled to do for themselves whatever is required. That is to say, their first need is not improvement of circumstance, but renewal of soul. If they have fulness of life and power, they will soon bend any circumstance to their own ends. To give them real and permanent assistance you must be in a position to communicate to them the higher life

that God has given you. In order to do that you must cast in your lot with them; you must be one with them in the struggle toward the best. You cannot be admitted to the secret places where life's decisions are really formed unless your interests and theirs are identical. Before you can bring into the souls about you what God has given you there must be a vital unity between you and them; Not otherwise can life be communicated." *

Bearing this in mind, then, it seems essential that God have the services of dedicated Christians in every walk of life. Only in this way can the Christian message be communicated effectively. When we , as Christians, object to and withdraw from vast areas of human activity we are not catching the significance of the terms, "glutton", "winebibber", "friend of publicans and sinners", as they were applied to our Lord during His ministry on earth.

In the light of these facts it would seem essential that God have representatives in the armies of the future. To complain that the situation will provide impossible dilemma in abundance is only to echo the Christian battle cry of the centuries, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard!" There may occasionally be cause for the Christian to shout hysterically that his nation is not behaving in a Christian way, but his main task will continue to be that of reproducing within his fellow men the desire to live with one primary loyalty - to God.

Recruits are to be sought and won to this loyalty in every profession, including that of soldier. It will not be done by standing back finding fault, nor by standing off on a far hilltop calling at them to come. It will be done, rather, by a patient, faithful building of solidarity with them through genuine concern and mutual understanding. Doctor Pidgeon further indicates the nature of the Christian task as he goes on to say; "One of the difficulties felt by eager spirits here is the slowness of people's advancement. Their capacity seems to be limited, even for their own good. He can go so much farther and faster than they can, and he seems to be stunting himself to keep pace with them. Yet if his commission is to bring men to God's purpose of grace for them, he repudiates his call if he expends his energies on self-culture instead of the general good. As A.B. Bruce puts it: 'If the fact turn out to be that he alone has advanced far before his time and left all other men just where they were, what has he gained? In vain does a railway engine start off at lightening speed, and reach its destination in an incredibly short time, if it leaves the train behind. The law of love dictates a slackened pace. Take the train along with you. The world's best men have been content to move slowly, when by so doing they were able to carry their fellow-men along with them. They have respected the great law of solidarity and accomodated their pace to its requirements. ' They found it better to lift the race an inch than it would have been to climb a mile alone. " *

Perhaps the greatest virtue which will be required by the Christian soldier is an exceedingly impartial and discerning honesty in regard to the "justice" his part in the war is helping to bring about. Niebuhr warns us that nations, as such, are notorious for looking out for their own interests almost exclusively. He comments, "The selfishness of nations is proverbial. It was the dictum of George Washington that nations were not to be trusted beyond their own interests. 'No state', declares a German author, 'has ever entered a treaty for any other reason than self interest,' and adds; 'A statesman who has any other motive would deserve to be hung,' . 'In every part of the world,' said professor Edward Dicey, 'where British interests are at stake, I am in favor of advancing these interests, even at the cost of war. The only qualification I admit is that the country we desire to annex or take under our protection should be calculated to confer a tangible advantage upon the British Empire.' National ambitions are not always avowed as honestly as this,....., but that is a fair statement of the actual facts, which need hardly be elaborated for any student of history." *

We may hope that this particular verdict is over-pessimistic, but no glaring examples have been seen in international affairs to confirm our hope.

Accordingly, the Christian in the army will have to concede the fact that there will be times when that which he is fighting for will be unjust. If he is aware of it and the issue is clear, it may well be his part to disobey orders. This much has been est-

ablished clearly by the Nurnberg trials. It was stated that a citizen is morally responsible for his acts, and that a soldier ordered by a superior officer to do certain kinds of evil should disobey that officer. The Christian soldier must go one step further. It must be his wish before God that if unknown to himself he is fighting for an unjust cause, and that the triumph of justice requires either or both the defeat of his forces, and his own destruction, that these things be brought about. It is no more than he is willing upon the opposing forces, if they in turn are the ones in the wrong.

The most vital challenge to the Christian today, however, is to find an effective alternative to war; one that will catch the imagination of the human race. As William James says: "What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible." What he says makes practical sense. After all, there is no inner surge of ecstasy at the knowledge that you have made a shambles out of half the world. Something more inspiring is needed to draw the highest and best from men.

When this alternative is found, it is safe to predict that it will be in the area of self sacrifice, or more positively, self investment in the self realization of others. It is this principle which Jesus said alone could bring human life into fulfill-

ment, and it stands as one of the few areas of human activity that draws universal admiration.

What stands in the way of its wider application is the fact that its merits are hidden beneath a rough exterior. George Pidgeon calls it the vicarious life, and of it he says: "Human society lives and grows because its best, which is God's best, devote their lives to nourishing the things worth while in their fellows. Never was a nation led into union with the divine except at the price of the blood of many of God's children, and of the lifelong sacrifice and devotion of thousands of others. What then is the vicarious life ? It is the life which is given up to others, and which finds itself in what they become thereby. The root principle of the vicarious life is the acceptance of responsibility for the welfare of one's world. The person committed to it finds his being's aim and end in the highest good of the whole and devotes his life to securing it. The vicarious life is, therefore, self-investment in others' self-realization....." *

There is an echo of the "vicarious life" both in the conduct of the soldier who gives his life in defence of others, and in the pacifist who bears the brunt of public opinion that a vital truth may be defended. But strangely enough, no Christian of our country has demonstrated the vicarious principle as thoroughly or effectively as a certain Indian, who, because of the color

*Pidgeon - opp. cit. pp.1,2.

of his skin was on one occasion turned away from a Christian church in South Africa where he had gone to hear C.F. Andrews speak. This may have been the reason why this Indian, Mahatma Gandhi, never adopted the Christian faith, though greatly admiring it.

The Mahatma (great-souled) with his program of Satyagraha (satya - truth, agraha - firmness) stirred the imagination of the whole civilized world. He first used Satyagraha (soul-force, or truth-force) to seek the removal of unjust legislation against the Indian population in South Africa. At the time it was illegal for Indians to enter the Transvaal without a permit. The Mahatma led his followers in disobedience to this law and they of course arrived in jail in great numbers. Passive endurance of any and everything was the rule of conduct throughout, and it met the Indian consciousness with great appeal. Hindu religion and philosophy provided it with a natural setting. When Mrs. Gandhi was arrested, the imprisonment of a woman, and of such note aroused resentment throughout India, and even in Great Britain.

Gandhi would not take unfair advantage. When the railroad employees went on strike he called off the Satyagraha as putting undue pressure on the government. He won the admiration of General Smuts, who reconsidered and set the legislation right. Something new had appeared among historic forces!

The same "soul-force" was later directed toward the securing of independence for India. "It seemed completely absurd. Here was

a man in a loincloth and a lathi (bamboo walking stick) going out to do battle with the greatest Empire that ever existed, and promising not to return until independence had been gained. Never were two sides more unequally matched. But here was something more than a little man and a stick - here was the embodiment of an idea; he would match his capacity to suffer against the other's capacity to inflict the suffering, his soul-force against physical force; he would not hate, but he would not obey, and he would wear down all resistance by an infinite capacity to take it. Here was a technique that had been applied here and there in history, but never applied to a problem on the scale of nothing less than the freedom of one-fifth of the human race. The stakes were immense, and the cards seemed all stacked against him. How could he win? But we soon began to see the immense power of an embodied idea. The British were baffled. This was illustrated when a burly Irish military officer said to me: 'If they'd only fight with weapons we understand, we would show them something. But this..' And he shook his head helplessly. Gandhi was getting behind the military armor and striking at the heart and conscience, and a great nation was striking back, but wincing under the blows falling upon its inner spirit.

After a struggle of seventeen years from the time he left the Ashram the battle was over. The little man had won. Independence was conceded. Never in human history had such a battle been fought with such weapons and with such a victory." *

The Mahatma's soul-force, with its application of good will

far in excess of justice, is an uneasy reminder to the Christian of what the Sermon on the Mount might be like if anyone ever got around to applying it. A major part of the explanation of its success is seen in the extremely high standards to which Gandhi expected the Satyagrahi to rise:-

"As an individual.

1. A Satyagrahi, i.e., a civil resister, will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In doing so he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate, but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he may lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also, he may not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of Ahimsa.
8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In course of the struggle if one insults an official, or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

As a prisoner.

10. As a prisoner, a civil resister will behave courteously toward prison officials, and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self-respect; as for instance, while he will salaam the officials in the usual manner, he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and will refuse to shout, 'Victory to Sarkar,' (government) or the like. He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.

11. A civil resister will make no distinction between an ordinary prisoner and himself, will in no way regard himself as superior to the rest; nor will he ask for any conveniences that may not be necessary for the keeping of his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such conveniences as may be required for his physical and spiritual well-being.
12. A civil resister may not fast for want of conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to one's self respect.

As a unit.

13. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.
14. He will carry out orders in the first instance even though they appear to him to be insulting, inimical or foolish, and then appeal to higher authority. He is free to determine the fitness of the corps to satisfy him before joining it; but after he has joined it, it becomes his duty to submit to its discipline, irksome or otherwise. If the sum total of the energy for the corps appears to the member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connection; but, being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline.
15. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependants. It would be an accident if any such provision is made. A civil resister entrusts his dependants to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare wherein hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to make no previous provision. How much more, then, should such be the case in Satyagraha? It is the universal experience that in such times hardly anybody is left to starve." *

I mention the Mahatma at length because his was a contagious movement that caught the imagination of literally millions of people, and not in India alone. The rules of Satyagraha reveal a keen, orderly mind, and a tremendous insight as to understanding the thoughts, motives, and reactions of his fellow men. The accomplishments of Satyagraha

*Ibid pp. 131, 132.

far exceeded the prospects for success of an Indian war, and did so with a negligible fraction of the hardship. Moreover, the victory he brought about left no deep-scarring resentments to smolder for years, but only a vague, half baffled, half amused sense of wonder at this new force that had appeared with such irresistible dynamic in history.

The question which naturally follows on this is, if the conduct and attitude of Satyagraha could be employed effectively to gain a nation's independence, could it not be used with equal success as a means of defence ? The question will of course go unanswered until some nation becomes sufficiently daring on the one hand, or dissillusioned with war on the other, to try it. It could be a glorious experiment, but will need extremely effective leadership in order to hold the experimenters to the basic principle of indestructible good-will, without which the whole experiment will be lost. Carried out thoroughly it would leave an utterly impossible job of administration or control for the invader. Considering the Quaker study mentioned earlier, which finds a sincere desire for peace among the masses of the world today, there is every reason to believe that a nation armed only with Satyagraha would draw a tremendous sympathetic interest from a great many other nations. This would be an added and important deterrent for the invader.

The success of the whole experiment, however, would rest upon the experimenting nation's being prepared to have a fairly unanimous go at the thing, and there is little to suggest that any

nation today is even beginning to approach that position. This sort of divine foolishness appeals only to religious minds, and will take a large amount of promoting before the more practical members of society become infected with it. The fact remains, however, that it is the one force recently seen in world affairs which draws the finest response from friend and foe alike. For this reason if no other, we do well to keep it in mind. As Niebuhr says: "There is no problem of political life to which religious imagination can make a larger contribution than this problem of developing non-violent resistance. The discovery of elements of common human frailty in the foe and, concomitantly, the appreciation of all human life as possessing transcendent worth, creates attitudes which transcend social conflict and thus mitigate its cruelties. It binds human beings together by reminding them of the common roots and similar character of both their vices and their virtues. These attitudes of repentance which recognise that the evil in the foe is also in the self, and these impulses of love which claim kinship with all men in spite of social conflict, are the peculiar gifts of religion to the human spirit. Secular imagination is not capable of producing them; for they require a sublime madness which disregards immediate appearances and emphasises profound and ultimate unities." *

The soul-force experiment is continuing today in South Africa against the unequal legislation of the Malan government. It is deserving of a far more active and sympathetic interest than the West has yet evidenced. To date Malan seems more determined than

*Niebuhr - Opp. cit. pp. 254, 255.

ever to crush the resisters, but if they remain true to Gandhi's fifteen commandments he has a remarkable job on his hands.

Other suggested experiments appeared recently in the Christian Century in response to an invitation to its readers to submit suggestions for a Christian solution to the present conflict in Korea. Some interesting suggestions have come forth. The following editorial of March 11th. lists some of them, together with editorial comment: "Some would.....preach an indiscriminate friendship for communists no matter what they did. Others would bomb communist countries with goods, food and medicine instead of napalm - an idea which might under the right circumstances be worth trying. One would withdraw our military forces from Korea and send an army of peacemakers. At first thought this seems more fantastic than any other proposal, yet the missionaries are, if not an army, a couple of platoons whose purpose is to heal, to teach, to lift up, to build. Why not increase their numbers to a company, or a battalion, or even a regiment ? Most of the proposals contained in these letters possess vitality as well as sincerity. Even though they do not dispel the darkness, reading them provides one with hope that the light will yet break through. We can recall no time in the history of our country when the spirit of Christians was so deeply disturbed, when self questioning was so continuous and unrelenting, when the old answers were advanced with so little conviction, when the new seemed so elusive.

It is possible that we find the old formulas inadequate because we have come to believe that they offered peace at bargain-

counter prices and we don't but because we distrust cheap imitations? We haven't learned much, but at least we have found that there is a difference between a real and a false peace. At the same time, we have an uneasy feeling that we may not be willing to pay what the real peace will cost. What if it were true that to win peace it would be necessary for American Christians to raise a billion dollars and send 10,000 or 100,000 volunteers to Korea? Would we do it tomorrow, or would we tell our soldiers to hang on a while in Korea while we shop around for an easier, less expensive way? And what if that which we are required to share is more difficult to give than money, and harder to surrender even than the lives of our sons." *

The ideas our editor toys with here are not outside the range of possibility, nor of success, with the present world attitude to war. No fair minded person would suggest that we desert the South Koreans now, but what a wonderful opportunity for the soul-force experiment. The editor suggests 100,000 volunteers from America, but it would be unfortunate to limit such an experiment to any one country. It seems more like a matter for the World Council of Churches to sponsor, or better still the United Nations, since Christians have no monopoly on good-will, and stand to learn a good deal from a few thousand volunteers from the land of Satyagraha. Suppose then for example that 1,000,000 volunteers from all interested nations, armed only with indestructible good-will, with the

*The Christian Century - 407 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago 5 Ill.

ultimate in leadership; a program of healing, lifting, building, and teaching; a rule of conduct consisting of the Sermon on the Mount, or Gandhi's fifteen commandments, were to become our United Nations force in Korea, suitable equipped, and adequately supplied throughout the duration of the experiment. It could scarcely be more expensive than war, nor would it be apt to provoke anything near the hardship. As an experiment toward the eradication of war, it could well catch the imagination of the world. To gain an idea of its impact we need only picture our own reaction to such a program if it were suddenly to replace the red army attacks against our own forces. We have no adequate ground to believe that our North Korean and Chinese bretheren, though communist, would have a noticeably different reaction.

Though this be madness, it is still a divine madness, and there's method in it. We Christians have said and sung for centuries that the time will come when peace on earth and good will among men will be the rule rather than the exception. But the time has always been far off in the distance. It may be nearer than we think. The world may not yet be ready for it, but there's no harm in putting out a few feelers. If such a divine experiment fail, it will be a nobler calamity than when one of our alternative wars succeeds. The volunteers would accept that risk.

Harry R. Rudin gives us some indication of how nations react to good-will when he comments, "Jesus knew very well that men had need of a sense of fundamental security..... History

gives interesting support for the thesis. In the 19th century, when Europeans enjoyed their greatest security because of the absence of continental wars like those fought before 1815 and after 1914, and because of the nearly complete disappearance of famine, there was a decency in human behavior that is a monument to man's inner nobility when he feels secure. For that was the time when democracy was achieved in Europe, when surfdom and slavery were abolished, when mass education came in, when legal tolerance was extended to Jew and Catholic, when the Christian missionary movement had its great expansion. It was the age of man's greatest freedom, his emancipation from great evils.

In the decades after 1919, the so-called international era, when nothing was done to enable nations to get necessary food and resources through relaxation of the restrictions resting heavily on international trade, and nothing was done to eliminate the liklihood of war and thus relieve the nations of the burden of being always prepared for war, insecure nations went mad and things were done that stand as quite a different monument to human nature. In times of shattering insecurity men become desperate and brutal. What happened in nazi Germany can happen to any people that suddenly finds itself bereft of security." *

This examination of the last century and a half seems to indicate that any experiment in good-will can be depended upon to speak to and call out far higher aspects of human nature than the

*The Christian century opp. cit. June 4 ed. 1952. p. 665.

more conventional method of resistance through attack and threat of attack.

And here we must leave the Christian of the future to proceed on his own; with his head in the clouds and his feet in the mud! He is in the unreal position of being called to heavenly standards of conduct, while finding his feet firmly entangled in very earthly situations. With his mind's eye he has caught sight of a heavenly highway and longs to travel on it, but his heart tells him to stay there in the mud, patiently laboring to free his brother's wagon too, so that they may reach the highway together. The pacifist has gone part way to the highway to point out the way. The Christian soldier is still down in the mud pushing. Both tasks are indispensable!

. I have stated previously that neither course is the one that the Christian would choose as his idea of ideal behavior, since each is modified to a large extent by existing circumstance. Each is therefore but a temporary answer which compromises unreconcilable beliefs, and as such is unsatisfactory to the Christian who is naturally impatient to act purely according to his convictions. There is always the danger then that the pacifist may go the "absolute" distance to the highway, and lose contact with the brother he is hoping will follow, and the corresponding danger that the Christian who has chosen participation in war may lose sight of the ideal toward which he is striving. This danger is clearly illustrated in a fable either invented or retold by Malcolm Cowley which reads as follows: "There once was an Armenian named Joe. He had the finest lamb in all Armenia, with the longest and softest fleece. The lamb was so famous that Joe's wicked neighbors decided to steal it.

When he saw them coming, Joe took the lamb in his arms, ran to his cabin and barred the door. He began shooting at the robbers, first from the window on the East, then from the window on the West, then from the East again - but each time he crossed the room, he tripped over the lamb. Finally he opened the door, kicked the lamb outside, and went on fighting." Whenever either the Christian Pacifist or the Christian soldier loses sight of the reason for the position he has taken, he is in danger of losing the whole game.

However, the Christian who serves a living and active God must remember that one static position, adequate today, may be hopelessly inadequate tomorrow. Rather than a rigorously achieved and tenaciously held position, the Christian requires a sensitive heart and an open mind. To find a more uniquely Christian alternative to war, that can appeal to and absorb the future energies of nations to the same degree, is the glorious challenge to enterprising Christians of tomorrow.

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